



# STAFF REPORT TO COMMITTEE

**DATE OF REPORT** October 11, 2024  
**MEETING TYPE & DATE** Committee of the Whole of October 30, 2024  
**FROM:** Parks & Trails Division  
Operations Department  
**SUBJECT:** First Nations and Public Engagement Plan for the Regional Parks & Trails Master Plan Update  
**FILE:** 6120-30

## **PURPOSE/INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the proposed First Nations and Public Engagement Plan for the review and update of the Cowichan Valley Regional District Regional Parks & Trails Master Plan (RPTMP).

## **RECOMMENDED RESOLUTION**

For information.

## **BACKGROUND**

The 2007 Cowichan Valley Regional Parks & Trails Master Plan has guided the regional parks and trails program, inclusive of parkland acquisition, over the past 17 years. Through direction of the Board, a review and update of this plan was initiated in 2024. RC Strategies Consultants was engaged in late spring to undertake the RPTMP review and update process, inclusive of region-wide engagement with First Nations, other government entities, interested parties, and the general public. This process is also supported by the Board-appointed Regional Parks & Trails Master Plan Advisory Group (RPTMP Advisory Group).

RC Strategies has prepared a project First Nations and Public Engagement Plan (Attachment A) which was initially reviewed with the RPTMP Advisory Group at their October 15, 2024 meeting, with the Advisory Group supporting the Engagement Plan as outlined.

## **ANALYSIS**

The First Nations and Public Engagement Plan developed for the CVRD Regional Parks & Trails Master Plan review and update process:

- Outlines the goals of the engagement process;
- Identifies the target audiences for engagement and articulates the “promise to the public” for each audience, as well as the project’s approach to engagement with First Nations;
- Details the engagement tools/tactics and timelines that will be applied throughout the planning process; and
- Articulates the roles and responsibilities of the CVRD and the RC Strategies consulting team in implementing the engagement and communications program.

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## **First Nations engagement program**

First Nations will be engaged through a government to government process that will run separately from the broader engagement program with other government entities, interested parties, and the general public. In May 2024, the ten First Nations with reserves within the CVRD's boundary were sent a project notification letter, background, and a request for feedback on how best to engage. To date, responses have been received from Penelakut Tribe, Malahat Nation, Lyackson First Nation, Ditidaht First Nation, and Halalt First Nations. Malahat Nation, Lyackson First Nation and Halalt First Nations have inquired about or indicated requirements for capacity funding to participate in engagement. RC Strategies has included provisions for up to \$10,000 of the project budget to be available as support funding for First Nations' engagement participation.

## **Other governments, interested parties, and general public engagement program**

The broader engagement program has been developed in accordance with the International Association of Public Participation's (IAP2) best practices and core values with the CVRD's Public Engagement Policy.

Engagement tactics will include:

- Meetings at key intervals with the RPTMP Advisory Group throughout the project;
- Interviews with CVRD staff;
- Interviews with a cross-section of relevant government entities and interested parties;
- Online interested-parties surveys sent to a selection of groups and NGO's;
- Online public surveys and interactive crowdsource mapping, hosted on the "Plan Your Cowichan" project webpage; and
- Open Houses: Two series of four open house scheduled events in the north, south, central and west areas of the region with the first series of open house events planned for November 23-24, 2024.

Communications tactics will include:

- A "Plan Your Cowichan" project webpage, including information on the project, links to the 2007 RPTMP, and answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs);
- Emails to all Board Directors with information to share with constituents;
- Emails to all contacts on the Parks & Trails Division's interested parties list and others as noted by the RPTMP Advisory Group and notifying of the public engagement opportunities;
- Social media promotion of the project webpage and engagement opportunities;
- Posters at park trailheads and community venues;
- Newspaper ads; and
- News releases.

## **Engagement Stages**

Project engagement will be in two stages ("input" and "test"). Stage 1 ("input") will run mid-November to early December 2024, with a "What We Heard" summary report presentation to the Committee of the Whole scheduled for February 2025.

Stage 1 engagement tactics will ask for input on topics such as:

- The contextual changes, issues, opportunities, trends, and community needs that should influence the RPTMP update;
- Affirmation or update of the RPTMP's vision, principles, and other foundational policies;
- Affirmation or update of the roles and priorities of the regional parks system;
- Review and update of the regional parks and trails system management issues that the master plan should address;
- Review and update of the RPTMP's acquisition strategy policies, including acquisition criteria and the remaining sites of acquisition priority; and
- Review and update of the RPTMP's guiding policies for regional parks and trails development, management, and stewardship.

Stage 2 ("test") engagement is scheduled to run throughout May 2025, and will be seeking feedback on the proposed key updates to be incorporated in the updated RPTMP. The engagement responses will be summarized in a second "What We Heard" report.

#### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The engagement and communications program is designed to optimize engagement with strategies and timelines that can be accommodated within the project's approved \$185,000 budget funded through Budget Function 285 – Regional Parkland Acquisition.

#### **COMMUNICATION CONSIDERATIONS**

The Parks & Trails Division will be working with the Communications & Engagement Division to implement the communications aspects of the engagement plan.

#### **STRATEGIC/BUSINESS PLAN CONSIDERATIONS**

The review and update of the Regional Parks & Trails Master Plan will undertake the CVRD Strategic Plan 2023-2026's strategic actions (10.1,10.2) towards reviewing and updating the regional parkland acquisition strategy as well as the regional parks & trails program's strategies for protecting and preserving existing regional parks.

Referred to (upon completion):

- ☐ Community Services (*Cowichan Community Centre, Cowichan Lake Recreation, South Cowichan Recreation, Arts & Culture, Facilities & Transit*)
- ☒ Corporate Services (*Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology, Legislative Services*)
- ☐ Operations (*Utilities, Parks & Trails, Recycling & Waste Management*)
- ☐ Land Use Services (*Community Planning, Strategic Initiatives, Development Services, Building Inspection & Bylaw Enforcement*)
- ☐ Strategic Services (*Communications & Engagement, Economic Development, Emergency Management, Environmental Services*)

Prepared by



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Reviewed for form and content and approved for submission to the Committee:

Resolution:

☒ Corporate Officer

Financial Considerations:

☒ Chief Financial Officer

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A – CVRD Regional Parks & Trails Master Plan Update – First Nations and Public Engagement Plan